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Scandinavia

A corporatist model of knowledge?

Johan Strang

This book gathers twelve fascinating stories about the history of knowledge in postwar Scandinavia. It presents us with a broad range of source materials, questions, and focal points, from government information on nuclear fallout to left-wing oppositional book cafés. In this epilogue, I reflect upon the findings of the book from the perspective of an intellectual historian of 20th-century *Norden*.¹ I start by making some general outsider reflections on the emerging field of the history of knowledge, before discussing what the book contributes with regarding the role of Scandinavia in the global circulation of knowledge, the relations between the Scandinavian countries, and knowledge in the welfare state and the particular period in focus in this book, the 1960s and 1970s.

As an intellectual historian, there is undoubtedly much I can sympathize with in the history of knowledge. Crucial is the focus on the historicity and changing nature of knowledge, on the transformations and interpretations of knowledge when it travels from one context to another, and on questions regarding social and cultural authority. Trained as a philosopher, however, I cannot help that my initial reflex when confronted with the term “history of knowledge” is that of a slight concern with the unnecessary epistemological commitment that seems to follow from professing to study “knowledge” rather than “ideas”. The theoretical literature on the history of knowledge has pursued this issue in a variety of ways, ranging from Philipp Sarasin’s and Simone Lässig’s emphasis on rationality, reason, and evidence to Peter Burke’s more pragmatic approach, according to which historians of knowledge study whatever the historical actors themselves considered knowledge.² Only a few chapters in the book at hand dwell on these kinds of theoretical reflections. Bo Fritzboøger is one of the exceptions and seems to adopt a position close to Burke when stating that the history of knowledge studies “claims to knowledge”. To me, this sounds reasonable when it comes to issues such as environmentalism, sex education, or secularisation – to mention a few of the issues covered in the book – but it remains awkwardly applicable on plainly, ostensibly, and thoroughly political ideas such as neoliberalism or Eurocommunism. What new does history of knowledge bring to our understanding of these phenomena as compared to traditional histories of ideas or intellectual/political history?

One of the main differences between intellectual history and the history of knowledge, in my view, lies in the ambition of the latter to target actors and source materials beyond the political and intellectual elites. From the perspective of intellectual history, the question of *influence* remains one of a number of notoriously tricky questions. Without concrete evidence in the form of explicit references, it is nearly impossible to claim with any professed certainty that one intellectual inspired or influenced another, let alone claim that a particular philosophy or ism has shaped the direction of society at large. Intellectual historians have developed a repertoire of theoretical smokescreens to dodge this question.³ History of knowledge, by contrast, seems to put the question of influence at the centre of attention. In this book, most of the chapters set out to explore the circulation of some particular “knowledge”, whether in the form of a book, an author, or a set of ideas. While this strikes to me as a rather perilous venture, there are some inspiring and interesting developments to learn from.

Particularly promising in relation to this is the rediscovered focus on materiality, highlighted in the theoretical literature on the history of knowledge, and demonstrated by several of the individual chapters in this volume. If traditional intellectual history sometimes risks relying a bit too heavily on the driving force of the ideas themselves, the history of knowledge insists that material, physical, and social conditions are crucial if we want to understand the circulation of ideas. This means that the history of knowledge, to a higher degree than intellectual history, must include a cross-disciplinary element, linking together different fields such as intellectual history, book history, media history, economic history, social history, or the history of social movements. While this might risk the history of knowledge turning into a rather unfocused venture, it can also be seen as a strength. Indeed, as pointed out by my fellow intellectual historian Suzanne Marchand, perhaps the point of pursuing research under a new heading such as “history of knowledge” is to bring scholars with different backgrounds together in new joint ventures.⁴ This is clearly also one of the main benefits of this particular book, where scholars with various backgrounds use “the history of knowledge” as a common denominator for discussing 1960s and 1970s Scandinavia.

The focus on materiality also links the history of knowledge to the burgeoning field of digital humanities, as exemplified by the extensive use of digitalised newspapers in several chapters in this book. In his reflective chapter, David Heidenblad Larsson discusses the challenges for historians faced with an abundance of source material in which it is easy to identify solitary examples but where both the larger context and the immediate situation in which the text was published tend to become more difficult to comprehend: it is easy to find needles but difficult to see the haystack. This is something I can recognise from the field of conceptual history, where the rise of digital tools has coincided with a turn away from the Skinnerian focus on actors making linguistic moves (speech acts) in particular contexts and a return of a more traditional Koselleckian interest in the long-term trajectories (and frequencies) of the concepts themselves.⁵ Old-school intellectual historians such as Marchand and

myself, who are more interested in the “who” and the “why” than the “how” and the “what”, cannot help but look at this development with slight umbrage.⁶

At the same time, however, Larsson Heidenblad aptly argues that digital humanities can serve the positive purpose of broadening the scope of studied actors from leading politicians, intellectuals, and authors to previously largely ignored groups of people such as journalists, who, after all, produced the lion’s share of the written text consumed by Scandinavians in the 1960s and 1970s. What this turn requires, however, is a closer cooperation with press historians and media scholars. As noted by Sunniva Engh in her chapter on Norwegian newspaper discussions on the Swedish neo-Malthusian Georg Borgström, this was a period of transition for the Nordic newspaper industry. The traditional politicised party press system was gradually abandoned for more neutral and professionalised forms of journalism.⁷ This is certainly a valid point. However, when studying the latter half of the 20th century, it would also be crucial to pursue cooperation with scholars with expertise in radio and TV, as especially the latter grew enormously in importance during the 1960s and 1970s.⁸ Non-textual sources (such as images, public speeches, official meetings, private discussions, etc.) have always represented something of a blind spot for intellectual historians and historians of knowledge alike.⁹ However, if the aim is to give a fair image of broader forms of societal knowledge, the fact that mass communication during the 20th century to a significant degree occurred without leaving records in the form of letters printed on paper constitutes an even more serious methodological challenge. Until we find a way of treating broadcasting on an equal level as traditional text-based sources, the digital turn runs the risk of only increasing the already distorted account we historians present of the circulation of knowledge during the postwar period.

Scandinavia in the global circulation of knowledge

History of knowledge, we learn from the introduction, focuses on the *circulation* rather than the origin of knowledge. In this sense, it contributes to the extensive discussion on transnationalism that has reconditioned the historical disciplines during the past decades.¹⁰ In intellectual history, for example, much attention has been placed on the processes of selective interpretation and appropriation that inevitably take place when an idea is moved from one place to another.¹¹ Knowledge does not travel in sealed containers; it is constantly moulded in order to serve particular purposes in the new contexts in which it is introduced.

What do we learn from this book about Scandinavia’s position in the global circulation of knowledge? A first observation in this respect is that Scandinavia appears to be more on the receiving than the sending end. Most of the chapters address the Scandinavian reception of a book or some other body of knowledge and discuss the special interpretations and functions assigned to this knowledge in its new context. To be sure, it is possible that the dominance of reception stories is a consequence of the methodological preferences of the history of knowledge. If the ambition is to study the circulation of knowledge in society

beyond political and scholarly elites, it is perhaps only natural to concentrate on how imported knowledge has been disseminated in Scandinavia, rather than on how knowledge originating in Scandinavia has travelled elsewhere.

That said, I sincerely think that it could be an interesting task for future research to target failed and more successful attempts to export “Scandinavian knowledge” to different parts of the world. This would probably increase the span of collaboration of historians of knowledge even further, as such a task would preferably have to be initiated in cooperation with foreign scholars. Pursuing Scandinavian knowledge export, the history of knowledge could yield an important contribution to, for example, research on the global reach of the Nordic welfare model, the discussion on policy transfers, as well as the burgeoning field of Nordic branding and national reputation management.¹² The 1960s and 1970s were also decades of growing Scandinavian engagement in the global south, which, in all its Cold War and colonial complexity, could be an interesting field to approach from a history of knowledge perspective.¹³

A second observation regarding Scandinavia’s position in the global circulation of knowledge in the 1960s and 1970s pertains to the overwhelming predominance of knowledge imported from the United States. The Scandinavian countries, neutral or not, were obviously heavily Americanised during the decades following the Second World War, and the importance of American ideas, expertise, and funding for the development of both the welfare state and scholarly communities has been studied extensively.¹⁴ This book can be seen as a contribution to this literature, expanding the focus beyond the political or scientific elites to a discussion of the broader societal impact of American knowledge, ranging from Caspar Sylvest’s chapter on how American debates on the dangers of nuclear fallout resonated in a Danish context to Anton Jansson’s chapter on the Swedish reception of the book *The Secular City* (1965), by American theologian Harvey Cox.

This palpable Scandinavian dependence on American knowledge could form the point of departure for interesting theoretical reflections regarding geo-cultural asymmetries and power relations within the field of history of knowledge.¹⁵ To be sure, I am not advocating a return to the antiquated diffusionist idea of simple one-way traffic from a producer of knowledge to passive recipients. As shown by Jansson, Cox’s book was interpreted quite differently in Sweden, where, for example, the chapter on sex did not raise anyone’s eyebrows. Nevertheless, it is indisputable that some regions are more frequently at the receiving end than others and that this is a fact that deserves to be taken more seriously from a theoretical and methodological perspective. Indeed, even if focusing on “circulation” is supposed to underscore that knowledge does not travel without restrictions, I cannot help being slightly concerned that the circulation concept itself – in its allusion to reciprocity and restriction-free travel – might serve the opposite purpose of obscuring hierarchies between actors of different stature and reputation or between societies and cultures asymmetrically related to each other.¹⁶

Questions of power and hierarchy have been pertinently addressed in the literature on the circulation of ideas, science, and knowledge in the global

south, and as such it has been deeply informed by postcolonial perspectives.¹⁷ There is undoubtedly much that has been produced in this tradition that could be used to shed light on small European countries such as those in Scandinavia as well. I am thinking, for example, of the relationship between military and economic power, on the one hand, and cultural prestige, on the other. But I am also referring to the intricate logic of asymmetrical knowledge transfers, where ideas produced in the United States or Western Europe were more easily recognised as knowledge in Scandinavia than the other way around. Indeed, when Cox's book on secularisation was introduced in Sweden, its American origin served as an important selling point. Scandinavian discussions, by contrast, were usually ignored in the United States, and there were a number of serious obstacles to overcome before Scandinavian actors, ideas, or knowledge could make a mark in the United States. And before Scandinavian knowledge could circulate to other peripheries, it had to be picked up and "consecrated" in the centre.¹⁸

That said, there are certainly limitations to the applicability of theories addressing the inequalities of colonial, imperial, or racial dominance on intra-European relations. The position of Scandinavia has never been that of the complete outsider, as Scandinavian actors were recognised and sometimes even allowed to take part in the "universal" discussion of the West. And American (or "Western") knowledge was hardly ever used in order to exploit and subjugate Scandinavia. Nonetheless, as shown by numerous examples in the book, it was usually a matter of one-way traffic from a cultural centre to a periphery keen on learning about the latest trends.

Scandinavia as a public sphere

What do we learn from the book about the relations between the Scandinavian countries? To treat the three Scandinavian countries together in a collective volume on the history of knowledge in the 1960s and 1970s seems natural given not only the many similarities between the societies in question, but also the many links between the countries. Most notably, perhaps, Eirinn Larsen shows how Nordic cooperation as such was of formative significance for the development of the feminist movement. Some chapters study intra-Scandinavian knowledge transfers, while others have a comparative ambition. And even if the majority of chapters are written mainly from a national perspective, the book does collectively present us with an interesting material for reflecting over the similarities and differences between Denmark, Norway, and Sweden.

In relation to this, it is also interesting to pay attention to intra-Scandinavian hierarchies and asymmetries. The chapters that discuss the internal Scandinavian circulation of knowledge strongly indicate that Norwegian and Danish actors looked more to Sweden in search for knowledge than Swedes looked to its Scandinavian neighbours. From Sunniva Engh's chapter, for example, we learn that the Swedish environmentalist Georg Borgström became enormously important in Norway, while the Danish debate book *Oprør fra midten* (1978), according to Bo Fritzboeger, was discussed in Norway but did not travel

to any large extent to Sweden, even if the questions and perspectives it raised could have been very topical also in that context.

To be sure, following the Second World War, Sweden was more prosperous than its neighbours, which arguably resulted in a certain pre-eminence also in the cultural and scientific spheres. Precisely as is often the case with global asymmetries, however, it seems to me that the conundrum of Swedish cultural dominance in the region as well as Swedish self-sufficiency is best understood in temporal terms.¹⁹ In such a reading, Norway could be understood as the laggard, which either due to a conservative ideology or because of late modernisation looked at developments elsewhere – in Sweden or the Anglo-American world – as possible futures upon which one could act with anticipation.²⁰ Denmark appears as the country most in sync with discussions in Europe or the United States, not as an equal participant in the discussion but as an observer eagerly picking up on knowledge that was circulating elsewhere. Sweden, in turn, stands out as a country that was simultaneously a Scandinavian locomotive of modernity and a peculiar parochial milieu largely disinterested in discussions in the other Scandinavian countries, or indeed anywhere else except for the United States.

Particularly illuminating in this respect is Björn Lundberg's account of the circulation of the famous book by American economist John Kenneth Galbraith, *The Affluent Society* (1958). In Sweden, Galbraith's concerns with the discrepancy between private and public wealth in modern growth societies were received as a description of pertinent problems in the United States, which were already largely solved in Sweden. In Denmark, by contrast, Galbraith was seen as representing an important discussion on challenges common to all Western societies, while in Norway, the book was seen as a warning for challenges that might arise in due time when Norway would "catch up" with the industrial and economic development of the United States and become an affluent society. The Scandinavian societies were moving at different speeds.²¹ And, interestingly, this asynchronicity could sometimes be mobilised for particular purposes, as illustrated by Hampus Östh Gustafsson's chapter on the "the crisis of humanities" in Sweden. Sometimes the crisis was presented as a common problem for all Western welfare states, occasionally as something particular to the Scandinavian region, but ever so often also as a *specifically* Swedish problem in narratives where Denmark could sometimes play the role of the "civilised" sibling society where modernisation had not yet reached as far as in Sweden. In this way, Gustafsson's discussion on the crisis of the humanities also speaks to an interesting combination of progressivity and backward-looking conservative sentimentality, perhaps characteristic of the 1968 movement as a whole.

A Scandinavian model of knowledge?

Power is a central notion in the methodological literature on the history of knowledge. In turning the attention away from the traditional obsession with the "origins" of knowledge and the one-dimensional diffusionist models of dissemination, the history of knowledge has, most notably in the programmatic

writings of Philipp Sarasin, emphasised the importance of taking into account the various social and economic factors that constrain and determine both what is sanctioned as knowledge and how this knowledge circulates.²²

These kinds of reflections are, with a few exceptions, conspicuously absent from this book on Scandinavia in the 1960s and 1970s. It would perhaps be compelling to explain this by reference to the comparatively homogeneous and egalitarian nature of the Scandinavian societies during the heyday of the Nordic welfare state. While there certainly might be some truth to this cliché, there could have been many obvious entry points for a history of knowledge perspective on the relationship between power and knowledge in the Scandinavian welfare state. I am naturally referring to the extensive (and largely Foucauldian) literature from the past decades, that has criticised the welfare state by highlighting its maltreatment of vulnerable minorities and individuals, as well as different oppressive policies (e.g., forced sterilisations) implemented and justified in the name of progress, science, and knowledge.²³ In my opinion, this literature has often tended to either lose itself in vague and abstract speculations on regulatory mechanisms and biopower or single out individual scientists, experts, or politicians as villains. Therefore, it would have been very interesting to see what a history of knowledge perspective could contribute to this discussion. There are many unanswered questions that could form the starting point for future research. For example: How widely did the “knowledge” that motivated these policies (e.g. on sterilisation) circulate in Scandinavia? And what kind of “knowledge” contributed to their demise?

To the extent that the individual chapters in this book address questions of power, it is not so much about the uses and misuses of knowledge, the dark sides of social engineering, or the tyranny of experts. Instead, the chapters tend to focus on the struggles of different actors to get a particular body of ideas *sanctioned* as knowledge. Take Orsi Husz’s fascinating account of how a Swedish entrepreneur became fixated with the idea to consolidate a particular narrative regarding the history of credit but failed to convince the professionals within academia and publishing, or Hampus Östh Gustafsson’s chapter on the struggles of Sven-Eric Liedman and his cohorts to rehabilitate the humanities after a long period of dominance by more instrumental empiricist-positivist sciences. Particularly fascinating is Kari Hernæs Nordberg’s chapter on the mid-1970s sex education reforms in Norwegian public schools, which explicitly targets the complicated negotiations between various bodies of knowledge that inevitably take place whenever new knowledge is introduced on a larger scale but which are especially manifest when it comes to the delicate issue of reproduction and sex. Hernæs Nordberg describes how new psychological and statistical knowledge was compromised by traditional conservative Christian knowledge before it was sanctioned by the state (i.e., the Ministry of Education) and introduced in the curriculum of public schools.

To be sure, in the Nordic countries, the *state* has traditionally played a crucial role as both producer and circulator of knowledge as well as guardian and judge of knowledge, perhaps especially during the period targeted by this volume.

The strong connection between the leading national universities and the state has been emphasised by historians across the region, and the role of experts in forming the welfare state has also been studied extensively.²⁴ However, what emerges from the broader history of knowledge perspective applied in this book is not so much an image of an omnipotent state on its own capable of dictating what could count as knowledge or not. Instead, the chapters tend to point in the direction of an intricate corporatist model of knowledge, where science and experts, on the one hand, and social movements and voluntary associations, on the other, were engaged in constant negotiations with state representatives. These different sectors of society typically did not represent adverse or competing interests; on the contrary, they supported each other and became allies, with their activities intertwining to such a degree that it was sometimes difficult to discern the boundaries of the state. Indeed, as Hernæs Nordberg notes, “it is not always clear what the state represents or constitutes”.

The idea that education and knowledge are crucial ingredients of the good society and that they should thus be made available for everyone has arguably been a crucial part Nordic political thinking since, if not the Reformation and its emphasis on public literacy, then at least the 19th-century folk high school (*folkehøjskoler*) tradition mainly associated with Danish pastor and educationalist N.F.S. Grundtvig (1783–1872). Education and knowledge were pivotal also for voluntary associations and social movements in the Nordic countries. Whether it was a rifle club, a temperance movement, or a labour organisation, these associations usually, as pointed out by the Finnish historian Henrik Stenius, entertained ambitious cultural objectives in the form of libraries, lecture series, and various publications.²⁵ Crucially, however, this knowledge was not produced and disseminated in order to overthrow the state or to present people with alternatives to state-sanctioned knowledge. On the contrary, the ambition was to influence the state and to contribute to the progress of society as a whole. The reformers and “activists” of these movements did not regard their position as outside of the state but as one intrinsic to it and thus taking shared responsibility for its development. “State” and “society” were not different spheres, but two aspects of the same thing.²⁶

This historical legacy formed a crucial background for the social democratic model of society that made Scandinavia famous in the 20th century. The role of the state had been substantial in the Nordic societies ever since the Church was incorporated into the state administration with the Reformation, but the 20th century saw its role increase even further. “State-sanctioned” knowledge was produced increasingly in public reports (*Statens offentliga utredningar*) commissioned by the state but conducted by independent scholars and experts. And the interplay between civil society actors and the state grew closer as the state often trusted organisations with the task of providing expert knowledge and popular opinion in support of its decisions (*remissväsendet*). Indeed, the social democratic welfare state deemed this corporatist system so central that it took increasing responsibility for funding the operation of (at least some particularly important) voluntary organisations, sometimes through direct institutionalisation but

more frequently respecting the arm's-length principle and a general division of labour.²⁷

This book is abundant with examples of this corporatist model of knowledge. The whole first part of the book serves as evidence of how the Scandinavian environmental movement engaged scholars and experts who founded and used voluntary organisations as a platform for increasing their influence. Expert knowledge was, for example, channelled to the state through the peace movement in Casper Sylvest's chapter on the debates on nuclear fallout. Similarly, Eirinn Larsen points to the crucial role of feminist scholars in the energetic and innovative popular women's movements that conquered the state, introducing what was later to be referred to as Scandinavian state feminism. Indeed, even programmatically "oppositional" movements such as the left-wing book cafes analysed by Ragni Svensson were incorporated as conductive elements of the democratic society. In this way, the "corporatist model of knowledge" must be seen as a crucial part of the explanation for how the 1968 movement was, as noted in the introduction to this book, disarmed, embraced, and integrated as part of a continuous development of the Scandinavian welfare societies.²⁸

A knowledge regime under attack?

If the Scandinavian corporatist model of knowledge emerges as a key finding of this book, the next question is whether this model was particular to the period under study or whether it exhibits longevity as a description of the Nordic societies. The 1960s and 1970s are often pinpointed as the high point of the social democratic dominance in Scandinavian politics. One way of thinking about this period from a history of knowledge perspective is to use the concept of a "knowledge regime" operationalised by Norwegian sociologist, philosopher, and intellectual historian Rune Slagstad in his seminal account of Norwegian history since 1814, *De nasjonale strateger* (1998).²⁹ For Slagstad, a knowledge regime is a particular constellation of political power, legal normativity, and scientific knowledge, and his book describes the shifting regimes from the "civil servant's state" (1814–1884), through the "Liberal Party state" (1884–1940) to the "Labour Party state" of the postwar period.

According to Slagstad, this last knowledge regime was characterised by a mutually reinforcing circle of Keynesian economists, American empiricist and behaviourist social scientists (pejoratively labelled "positivists"), and the social democratic politicians in power. However, while there are some examples in this direction in this book, it seems to me that it portrays less the Labour Party State itself (which, according to Slagstad, lasted until the 1980s) than the emerging contestation of this regime from a variety of angles. Hampus Östh Gustafsson's chapter deals explicitly with the so-called positivism debates where the dominant role of the instrumental social sciences was questioned in a generational struggle between old professors and young radicals rallying for the restoration of the humanities. Ragni Svensson's chapter highlights the left-wing criticism of the (social democratic) establishment, while Bo Fritzboøger's chapter, in turn,

deals with the “revolt from the centre” (*Oprør fra midten*), which was a counter-reaction to the radicalism of the 1970s, but also an independent attempt to provide an alternative to the disenchantment of the modern welfare state.

Most obviously, however, the contestation of the Labour Party knowledge regime is discussed in Niklas Olsen’s fascinating account of the interconnections between left-wing, libertarian-populist, and neoliberal criticisms of the welfare state: three disparate lines of thought, which were united in the view that society – the Labour Party State – was run by a self-sufficient autocratic elite in control of an ever-growing public sector with tentacles across society. In hindsight, it is probably fair to conclude that the neoliberal criticism proved to be the most perilous. As hinted already by Slagstad himself, market liberalism attacked the very idea of the state as a central node in the corporatist system; hence, it challenged not only the Labour Party knowledge regime but a whole Scandinavian tradition: the corporatist model of knowledge.³⁰ Neoliberalism was extremely difficult to embrace, disarm, and incorporate within the system itself in the vein that the Nordic societies usually have managed opposition like, for example, the 1968 movement.

Yet, historians seem to indicate that neoliberalism was introduced in Scandinavia not *against* the (welfare) state but *through* the (welfare) state.³¹ If this is true, then one might perhaps argue that Scandinavia eventually did find a place for neoliberal market philosophy in its state-driven corporatist model of knowledge. At the same time, Scandinavian scholars of associational life have recently pointed to a transforming civil society, with declining membership rates in the traditional mass movements and the rise of more flexible and ad hoc mobilisation, amounting in “a decline in the democratic infrastructure”.³² What is challenged, they argue, is not so much the role of the state in Scandinavia but rather the role of the voluntary organisations. Indeed, knowledge in Scandinavia is perhaps no longer negotiated in a virtuous circle of experts, the state, and voluntary organisations but to an increasing extent produced and circulated by think tanks with more direct relations to political power and business interest.

The history of the Nordic “neoliberal knowledge regime” remains to be written, but this book offers a great springboard. On the one hand, it has opened up for further reflections regarding Scandinavia’s position in the global circulation of knowledge, and, on the other hand, it has also pointed towards a Scandinavian corporatist model of knowledge and its subsequent contestation.

Notes

- 1 I follow the rest of the book in using “Scandinavia” for Denmark, Norway, and Sweden and “the Nordic countries” when I include Finland and Iceland. The Scandinavian term *Norden* (literally “the North”) has been introduced to the English language in order to denote the particular political culture and historical legacies of the region. See, for instance, Øystein Sørensen and Bo Stråth, eds., *The Cultural Construction of Norden* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997).
- 2 Philipp Sarasin, “Was ist Wissensgeschichte?”, *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 36, no. 1 (2011): 165; Simone Lässig, “The History of Knowledge and

- the Expansion of the Historical Research Agenda”, *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 59 (2016): 39; Peter Burke, *What Is the History of Knowledge?* (London: John Wiley and Sons, 2015), 7.
- 3 In my own research, for example, I have arrived at the position that it is better to avoid categorical statements regarding influence and instead focus on the individual intellectuals as actors, whose struggles reflect ideas and positions present in that particular context. See, for instance, Johan Strang, *History, Transfer, Politics: Five Studies on the Legacy of Uppsala Philosophy* (Helsinki: University of Helsinki, 2010).
 - 4 Suzanne Marchand, “How Much Knowledge Is Worth Knowing? An American Intellectual Historian’s Thoughts on the *Geschichte des Wissens*”, *Berichte zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte* 42, no. 2–3 (2019): 147.
 - 5 This shift is clearly visible in the introduction to the recent Berghahn series on European conceptual history. Willibald Steinmetz and Michael Freeden, “Introduction. Conceptual History: Challenges, Conundrums, Complexities”, in *Conceptual History in the European Space*, eds. Willibald Steinmetz, Michael Freeden, and Javier Fernández-Sebastian (Oxford: Berghahn, 2017).
 - 6 Marchand, “How Much Knowledge”, 144.
 - 7 Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 170–183.
 - 8 Trine Syvertsen, Gunn Enli, and Ole J. Mjøs, *The Media Welfare State: Nordic Media in the Digital Era* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2014).
 - 9 For a discussion on historicising sound, see Josephine Hoegarts and Kaarina Kilpiö, “Noisy Modernization? On the History and Historicization of Sound”, *International Journal for History, Culture and Modernity* 7 (2019).
 - 10 Matthias Middell and Lluís Roura, eds., *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2013); Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, “Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity”, *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006).
 - 11 Christophe Charle, Jürgen Schriewer, and Peter Wagner, *Transnational Intellectual Networks: Forms of Academic Knowledge and the Search for Cultural Identities* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 2004); Franco Moretti, *Distant Reading* (London: Verso, 2013); Samuel Moyn and Andrew Sartori, eds., *Global Intellectual History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).
 - 12 Pauli Kettunen and Klaus Petersen, *Beyond Welfare State Models: Transnational Historical Perspectives on Social Policy* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2011); Carl Marklund, “The Nordic Model on the Global Market of Ideas: The Welfare State as Scandinavia’s Best Brand”, *Geopolitics* 22, no. 3 (2016); Louis Clerc, Nikolas Glover, and Paul Jordan, eds., *Histories of Public Diplomacy and Nation Branding in the Nordic and Baltic Countries: Representing the Periphery* (Leiden: Brill, 2015).
 - 13 Thorsten Borring Olesen, “Scandinavian Development Policies”, in *The Routledge Handbook of Scandinavian Politics*, eds. Peter Nedergaard and Anders Wivel (London: Routledge, 2018).
 - 14 See, for instance, Klaus Petersen, John Stewart, and Michael Kuur Sørensen, eds., *American Foundations and the European Welfare States* (Odense: Syddansk universitetsforlag, 2013); Frederik Thue, *In Quest of a Democratic Social Order: The Americanization of Norwegian Social Scholarship 1918–1970* (Oslo: University of Oslo, 2006).
 - 15 Together with Stefan Nygård, I have pursued this idea with regard to intellectual history in a number of publications. See especially Marja Jalava, Stefan Nygård, and Johan Strang, *Decentering European Intellectual Space* (Leiden: Brill, 2018).
 - 16 Provocatively put, my impression is that “circulation” is a term that is used either by those in the centres who by virtue of their privileged position are blind to borders and restrictions or by postcolonialists who for political reasons want to emphasise reciprocity.
 - 17 Kapril Raj, “Beyond Postcolonialism . . . and Postpositivism: Circulation and the Global History of Science”, *Isis* 104, no. 2 (2013); Bernard Lightman, Gordon McOuat, and

- Larry Stewart, eds., *The Circulation of Knowledge Between Britain, India, and China: The Early Modern World to the Twentieth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 2013).
- 18 Pascal Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004).
 - 19 I have developed this idea together with Stefan Nygård in "Conceptual Universalization and the Role of the Peripheries", *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 12, no. 1 (2017).
 - 20 For a discussion on Finland's similar relation to Sweden, see Pauli Kettunen, "The Power of International Comparison: A Perspective on the Making and Challenging of the Nordic Welfare State", in *The Nordic Model of Welfare: A Historical Reappraisal*, eds. Niels Finn Christiansen, Klaus Petersen, Nils Edling, and Per Haave (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanu Press, 2006).
 - 21 Helge Jordheim, "Europe at Different Speeds: Asynchronicities and Multiple Times in European Conceptual History", in *Conceptual History in European Space*, eds. Willibald Steinmetz, Michael Freedén, and Javier Fernández-Sebastian (Oxford: Berghahn, 2017).
 - 22 Sarasin, "Was ist Wissensgeschichte?" 164.
 - 23 Gunnar Broberg and Nils Roll-Hansen, *Eugenics and the Welfare State: Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005); Gunnar Broberg and Mattias Tydén, *Oönskade i folkhemmet: Rashygien och sterilisering i Sverige* (Stockholm: Gidlunds bokförlag, 1991).
 - 24 Åsa Lundqvist and Klaus Petersen, eds., *In Experts We Trust: Knowledge, Politics and Bureaucracy in Nordic Welfare State* (Odense: University of Southern Denmark Press, 2010).
 - 25 Henrik Stenius, "Nordic Associational Life in a European and an Inter-Nordic Perspective", in *Nordic Associations in a European Perspective*, eds. Risto Alapuro and Henrik Stenius (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2010).
 - 26 It is often observed that the words "state" and "society" tend to be used interchangeably in the Nordic languages. According to Pauli Kettunen, for example, "society" is often used to express the moral obligation of the state. Pauli Kettunen, "The Concept of Society in the Making of the Nordic Welfare State", in *Globalizing Welfare: An Evolving Asian-European Dialogue*, eds. Stein Kuhnle, Per Selle and Sven Hort (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2019).
 - 27 Bo Rothstein, *Den korporativa staten: Intresseorganisationer och statsförvaltning i svensk politik* (Stockholm: Norstedts, 1992).
 - 28 Stenius, "Nordic Associational Life"; Thomas Ekman Jørgensen, *Transformation and Crises: The Left and the Nation in Denmark and Sweden, 1956–1980* (New York: Berghahn, 2008).
 - 29 Rune Slagstad, *De nasjonale strategier* (Oslo: Pax Forlag, 1998). For a short English version of his main arguments, see Rune Slagstad, "Shifting Knowledge Regimes: The Metamorphoses of Norwegian Reformism", *Thesis Eleven* 77 (2004).
 - 30 Slagstad, "Shifting Knowledge Regimes", 80; Stenius, "Nordic Associational Life".
 - 31 Jenny Andersson, *The Library and the Workshop: Social Democracy and Capitalism in the Knowledge Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2010); Niklas Olsen, *The Sovereign Consumer: A New Intellectual History of Neoliberalism* (Cham: Palgrave, 2019), Chapters 6–7.
 - 32 See, for instance, Tommy Tranvik and Per Selle, "More Centralization, Less Democracy: The Decline of the Democratic Infrastructure in Norway", in *State and Civil Society in Northern Europe: The Swedish Model Reconsidered*, ed. Lars Trägårdh (Oxford: Berghahn, 2007).